Every Muslim, male or female, young or old, has his or her part to play in this work. Our role models are undoubtedly the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) and his sahaba. If we study the example of the sahaba when they migrated to Abyssinia we can take many lessons from them that apply to our situation today.

The early Muslims faced unbearable levels of persecution in the Arabian Peninsula instigated by the Quraysh in Makkah. When the Quraysh heard that some Muslims, being afraid of forced apostasy, had emigrated to Abyssinia they sent two determined envoys after them to discredit the Muslims in the hope that the Negus would expel them from his kingdom and have them sent back. The two envoys were ‘Amr ibn al-‘As ibn Wa’il and ‘Abdullah ibn Rabi’ah. They reached Abyssinia and offered presents to the generals of the Negus to help them convince the Negus to extradite the Muslim refugees.

They said to them,“*Some foolish fellows from our people have taken refuge in the King’s country; they have forsaken our Deen (religion) and not accepted yours, but have brought into being an invented Deen which neither we nor you know anything about. Our nobles have sent us to you to return them. So surrender them to us, for their own people have the keenest insight and know most about their faults.”*

They also stipulated that the King should not speak to the Muslims, fearing what they might say to him.

The generals met with the Negus and recommended that he surrender the Muslims to their own people. The Negus summoned the Muslims and demanded to hear what they had to say for themselves.

Ja’far ibn Abi Talib was the leader and spokesman of the Muslims who migrated to Abyssinia. When he and the companions entered the court of the Negus they refused to bow down to him as the two envoys and the rest of the King’s subjects had done. When questioned about this Ja’far said, “*We do not bow down before anyone except Allah.”*
Ja’far then gave a speech presenting Islam to the Negus. He said, “*O King! We were ignorant people and we lived like wild animals. The strong among us lived by preying upon the weak. We obeyed no law and we acknowledged no authority save that of brute force. We worshipped idols made of stone or wood, and we knew nothing*

of human dignity. And then Allah, in His Mercy, sent to us His Messenger who was himself one of us. We knew about his truthfulness and his integrity. His character was exemplary, and he was the most well-born of the Arabs. He invited us toward the worship of One God, and he forbade us to worship idols. He exhorted us to tell the truth, and to protect the weak, the poor, the humble, the widows and the orphans. He ordered us to show respect to women, and never to slander them. We obeyed him and followed his teachings. Most of the people in our country are still polytheists, and they resented our conversion to the new faith which is called Islam. They began to persecute us and it was in order to escape from persecution by them that we sought and found sanctuary in your kingdom."

When Ja'far concluded his speech, the Negus said to Ja'far, "*Do you have with you anything from what your Messenger brought from Allah to read to me?"*

Ja'far said, "*Yes,"* and recited Surah Maryam from the beginning until where Allah سبحانه وتعالى says:

[فَأَشَارَتْ إِلَيْهِ قَالُوا كَيْفَ نُكَلِّمُ مَن كَانَ فِي الْمَهْدِ صَبِيّاً][مريم][29]
[قَالَ إِنِّي عَبْدُ اللَّهِ آتَانِيَ الْكِتَابَ وَجَعَلَنِي نَبِيّاً][مريم][30]
[وَجَعَلَنِي مُبَارَكاً أَيْنَ مَا كُنتُ وَأَوْصَانِي بِالصَّلَاةِ وَالزَّكَاةِ مَا دُمْتُ حَيّاً][مريم][31]
[وَبَرّاً بِوَالِدَتِي وَلَمْ يَجْعَلْنِي جَبَّاراً شَقِيّاً][مريم][32]
[وَالسَّلَامُ عَلَيَّ يَوْمَ وُلِدتُّ وَيَوْمَ أَمُوتُ وَيَوْمَ أُبْعَثُ حَيّاً][مريم][33]

|29|So she pointed to him. They said, "How can we speak to one who is in the cradle a child?" |30|[Jesus] said, "Indeed, I am the servant of Allah. He has given me the Scripture and made me a prophet. |31|And He has made me blessed wherever I am and has enjoined upon me prayer and zakah as long as I remain alive |32|And [made me] dutiful to my mother, and He has not made me a wretched tyrant. |33|And peace is on me the day I was born and the day I will die and the day I am raised alive." [Maryam 19:29-33]

When the patriarchs heard this they said, "*This and what our Lord 'Isa (Jesus) the Messiah brought are from the same source."*

King Negus listened to the recitation of the Qur'an and cried so much that his beard was wet.

The Negus said, "*Of a truth, this and what Musa brought, come from the same niche. You two may go, for by Allah, I will never give them up and they shall not be betrayed."*

The two envoys left the Royal Palace and began to think of another way to fulfil their task. The next day 'Amr ibn al-'As went back to the Negus and said to him, "*The Muslims say dreadful things about 'Isa, son of Maryam, send for them and ask them about it."*
He did so and Ja'far replied, "*We say about him that which our Prophet brought, saying, he is the slave of Allah and His Messenger, and His spirit, and His word, which He cast into Maryam the blessed virgin."*

The Negus took a stick from the ground, drew a line in the soil with it and said to Ja'far, "*There is nothing more than this line between your Deen and ours",* and he discharged the two envoys empty-handed.

There are four main lessons we can learn from the example of Ja'far ibn Abi Talib to the Negus.

Lesson 1. Never compromise the shari'ah rules

The Muslims were under enormous pressure before the Negus. Failure to present a strong case would have meant their deportation back to Mecca to face certain torture and possibly death. Despite this pressure they refused to compromise their deen and bow down before the Negus, even though this may have acted against them. Although the Muslims refused to bow down they explained their position in an intellectual manner that the Negus understood and being a religious man ultimately agreed with.
When presenting the message of Islam we must therefore adhere to the rules of Islam at all times. We must not lie, backbite, slander, insult or compromise any other rule of Islam. Principles such as necessity and 'ends justify the means' have no place in conveying the message of Islam.

Lesson 2. Never twist the message of Islam.

When Ja'far was questioned by the Negus over Islam's view on Isa (as), he did not attempt to disguise or twist Islam's view. Ja'far clearly articulated that Islam views Isa (as) as a messenger of God and not the son of God.

We must never twist or disguise parts of Islam in order to present an opinion that the government or media find more palatable. Muslims have nothing to be ashamed of regarding their Islamic values and must refuse to accept western claims that Islam is backward and an ‘evil ideology’ responsible for all the terrible things happening in the world.

Lesson 3. Understand your audience.

The Negus was a Christian King. Therefore out of all the verses of Qur’an revealed at that time, Ja’far chose a verse from Surah Maryam describing one of the miracles of Isa (as) that he knew the Negus could relate to. This verse had such an effect on the Negus that he wept till his beard was wet.

Understanding our audience and choosing the most relevant examples that will relate to them is vital. When addressing youth, professionals, academics, politicians or media the message will remain the same but the styles and means of language will change.

Lesson 4. Accounting the rulers.

The two Quraysh envoys tried to prevent the Negus from listening to the Muslims fearing what they would say about them. When Ja’far gave his speech he indeed exposed the persecution and injustice of Quraysh creating public opinion in the court against them. Ja’far refused to remain silent over the injustice of Quraysh even though if he and the companions were deported back to Makka their persecution would have increased.
The west and their agents ruling our lands use all means at their disposable to try and silence any voice that speaks against them. Torture, propaganda, imprisonment and killings are perpetrated against those brave enough to stand up to the western occupation and the brutality of the Muslim rulers.

Jabir (RA) narrated the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: "The master of the martyrs is Hamza ibn Abdul Mattalib, and a man who stands (in front of) an oppressive ruler and enjoins the good and forbids the evil and so is killed for it." [Mustadrak al-Haakim (3/215) No. 4884]

Conclusion
In whatever situation we find ourselves in there is always guidance to be found in the Book of Allah (swt) and the Sunnah of the Messenger (ﷺ). We must also study the lives of the sahaba, the best generation (May Allah be pleased with them) who were human

beings of different races and backgrounds with various strengths and weaknesses, and who managed to mould their personalities according to Islam. Indeed there are countless lessons we can learn from their lives to help us in ours.